

Generation Fit: A Focus on Health and Wellness in LaGrange, Georgia

Servant Scholars Program

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Jack Slay

Introduction

Project Generation Fit addresses factors that relate to modern health and wellness issues within the community of Troup County, Georgia. Several factors that positively affect health and wellness within Troup County include access to healthy food, mental health awareness, and the effects of physical exercise. The elements of Generation Fit were developed in response to the lack of education and awareness of health disparities; the following programs encourage action to address these issues. According to Georgia's Department of Health, in the past four years there have been 1,487 deaths were related to cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes in Troup County.

Based on our previous experiences at various local non-profit organizations during our junior year (such as Circles of Troup County, Relay for Life, the Enoch Cancer Clinic, and The Active Life), and a combination of research on health issues within Troup County such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, it was determined that a large portion of the community is suffering. The causes of these diseases in Troup County are related to the factors above, as well as those to be addressed. Further research showed that there are few educational programs and limited awareness of these health concerns in our community. The literature discussed in the course of this paper provides a foundational understanding of factors affecting health that aided in the development of the overall project.

Literature Review

As a cohort, when deciding what our senior project should be, we were faced with the fact that we would not have a "central location" to go to "easily" perform service hours guided by a mentor. We knew that this would be a challenge since no cohort had done this before. However, by reading and gaining knowledge through the research we performed and conducted, we have been able to flourish in our project and create a list of what to do and what not to do. The texts read about in the next couple pages, we feel, have been able to truly represent what Generation Fit has grown to become: an operation equipped with the tools to bring health and awareness to our community.

To launch our project we first had to identify what health problems and risks were hindering LaGrange. *The Brunner & Suddarth's Textbook of Medical-Surgical for Nursing* highlights the impact that cancer, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and diabetes have on our overall health. It encompasses the leading causes of each disease and provides educational tips for prevention. This resource showcases how much of an impact healthy eating and consistent exercise have on each of these diseases as a unit and individually as well. This excerpt claims that "many lung and heart disorders are related to or exacerbated by tobacco smoke," which adds to the already astounding smoking and lung cancer rates that LaGrange produces (Brunner & Suddarth, 473). The best ways to

implement prevention into one's lifestyle is through "dietary modifications, exercise, weight loss, and careful monitoring of vital strategies for managing the top three major cardiovascular disease risk factors" (Brunner & Suddarth, 665).

There have been numerous risk factors associated with the development of diabetes, and it is also responsible for the production of countless serious secondary diseases as well. Individuals who suffer from myocardial infarction, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease also suffer from diabetes. In more than 53% of patients, diabetes was their first disease diagnosis. According to Brunner & Suddarth, "diabetes is the leading cause of death from disease in the nation" (1417). With these staggering statistics in mind, we are hopeful that through our project we were able to make a substantial impact on the lifestyles and overall health statuses of those we share this community with.

After clearly seeing the need for a change in the average health status of a citizen in LaGrange, we next researched why this problem exists in order to best understand how to directly change it. *The Nurses' Role in Promoting Optimal Health of Older Adults* provides detailed information on the current health status of older adults and explains how to live a longer, healthier lifestyle. Research has shown that adults who eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables, exercise daily, and have an active support group within the community have a higher quality of life. This involves health promotion which "is a vital component of disease prevention and health maintenance for adults at any age" (Lange, 17). We chose to incorporate this concept into Generation Fit by creating opportunities to educate the general public and students on campus about how implementing these changes into their lives can increase the quality of them. One of the leading preliminary causes of disease is a lack of prevention which oftentimes is a result of a lack of education. Other contributing factors such as living in a rural community, not having adequate access to health care clinics, and being from a low socioeconomic status can negatively affect one's health.

A piece of literature that impacted a large portion of our project was Anabel Pelham and Elizabeth Sills' *Promoting Health and Wellness in Underserved Communities*, a volume compiling several examples of service learning projects led by educators and community caretakers. Due to the level at which nutrition habits contribute to diseases previously mentioned, an undergraduate class in California conducted a community health fair. They claimed that "nutrition related activities are essential to health promotion," which led us to adopt this into our project by organizing a community health fair (Pelham and Sills, 175). We also conducted a nutrition awareness event on campus to collect data for our research on how informed students are about the consequences of the nutritional choices they make. We, therefore, placed education at the core of our mission as well as considered those who are financially strained to make healthy choices. Socioeconomic status impacts health literacy, or understanding one's health condition, so we especially targeted this audience by introducing Little Free Pantries and health surveys, providing information at a Health and Wellness Fair, and interacting with the elderly at the Active Life.

Promoting Health and Wellness in Underserved Communities also discusses ways to conduct service learning with senior citizens, which we wanted to expand on in our community as health and wellness are important through all stages of life. We wanted to ensure that mental health was included as a factor in overall health which led us to connecting with this population that oftentimes is isolated,

lonely, and leads a sedentary lifestyle. Our inspiration came from a class at Sonoma State University which offers undergraduate students an opportunity to engage in weekly dialogue with this age group. They discovered that “in the process, students confront and discard myths and stereotypes about aging, lessen their own fears, and find unexpected mentors and friends in the older adult population” (Pelham and Sills, 19). The interviewees appreciate the intergenerational contact. Pelham states that through “reminiscing and talking about their past to interested young people and peers, older adults come to terms with how they have lived their lives” (Pelham and Sills, 28).

While we laid the foundation of why the climate of health in LaGrange is of concern and who we would target to aid in changing it for the better, we also needed to build a repertoire of understanding how our bodies efficiently process food and require nutrients and exercise. Paul Chek, author of *How to Eat, Move, and be Healthy*, simplified the purpose of our project by saying, “to get healthy we must begin to think right . . . you have to: drink right to think right, eat right to think right, and move right to think right” (2004). Nutritional needs differ on an individual basis, but there are general guidelines that apply to everyone and will aid in living a healthier life. Food is divided into five groups and although portions of each group will vary, they all contain essential nutrients for the body. In the text, Chek advises that whenever possible always opt for the organically raised products over the processed options; organic foods have a higher nutrition value, are loaded with secondary nutrients, have larger amounts of high-quality proteins, contain fewer toxins, and are better for the environment (Chek, 2004).

Choosing to eat a healthy diet is one aspect of leading a disease-free life, but having a strong support system is also an important factor. Jim Diers’ book *Neighborhood Power: Building Community the Seattle Way* is about his accounts of moving to and establishing himself into the city of Seattle. He recalls how he started to intertwine into the community and how it quickly became his community too. Having a sense of belonging in a community is one step into developing it for greatness. Diers suggests in the book how the local government is a key link in empowering those in a community, saying that the government “can mobilize the valuable resources that are in every neighborhood: time, money, materials, skills, knowledge, pride, and relationships” (32). In our project, we found this to be true; the City Council and other local leaders were a huge help to us in the planning stages of the project, especially with the Little Free Pantries. An important first step for placing these into our community was making sure that there was a need for it. To do this we approached our city’s leaders, understanding that “it is in the government’s best interest to help communities build their own organizations” and allow for those communities to express what needs to be done to reach their end goal (Diers, 32). However, government aid is not the only support needed when trying to establish an ongoing community project like the pantries. Something that we had to keep in mind was that “an idea with a lot of community support provides an opportunity for the [initiators] to work collaboratively with the community” (Diers, 56). Since we did have support from the community, they were very willing to help us acquire supplies, knowledge, artistic capability, and land for the pantries. Without community support, the project would have never reached where it is now.

We knew we wanted to help our community, but we wanted to make sure we were actually helping the people instead of hindering them further. Robert Lupton’s *Toxic Charity* details many of the unintentional negative effects that can result from service in communities that do mean well. One of

the most detrimental results is the disempowerment of individuals and communities. Charity without conscious forethought often treats the individuals that they are seeking to serve as incapable of addressing their own problems. Instead, they seek to resolve problems on their own without hearing from those who are directly experiencing the issues firsthand. Mindful community developers view the individuals they are serving as active agents and aid in community wide improvement. Choosing to serve in this manner actually empowers the people most capable and incentivized to address potential issues. We made sure to incorporate this into our project by asking guests who attend Our Daily Bread where Little Free Pantries could be placed around town to most effectively provide relief and be easily accessible.

While we certainly wanted Generation Fit to be successful, we did not want it to be strictly business, but more of a partnership. Striving to reach goals rather than developing meaningful connections can leave a negative impact on the very people we are attempting to help. Even “cause based models of mission, advocacy and relief often allow contributors/donors to provide help at a distance, captured by the concern but disconnected from the actual persons most affected by it” - these models reduce people down to issues (Heuertz & Pohl, 27). *Friendship at the Margins* offers a new and transformational model of missions and service: implementing the desire to create relationships. The authors, Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Pohl, say that before you try to help anyone, you should first be their friend. When we befriend those on the margins of society by practicing hospitality and a welcoming attitude, we create an interactive community where every member is fully appreciated. Throughout our project we have tried to put friendship at the forefront of everything that we do.

When Helping Hurts is a Christian faith-based book addressing ways to teach and correct current forms of alleviating poverty in various societies. The mission of the book is need-based and actively involves the people being served, so that services provided go beyond temporary relief of immediate problems. We see that relationship building, participation of the community, and an assessment of needs is what makes empowering people most effective. The idea of “the poison of paternalism” means “do not do things for people that they can do for themselves” (Corbett and Fikkert 109). From this text we have learned to be able to make connections with people at Our Daily Bread like Leroy, Swanson, and Lynette to learn more about their lives and also share our lives with them. We also implemented this with the Little Free Pantries, hoping that they would become self-sustaining as community members would want to restock them with supplies on their own rather than accept continuous handouts from those who pity them.

Another portion of our project that directly involves community members in driving change is Relay for Life. This event is designed to fight cancer through community-fed donations. This involves building a sense of community, increasing awareness, and fundraising to aid in research efforts. While fundraising is typically viewed as a distant and indirect means of helping a cause, we found that its true purpose bears greater significance. Henri Nouwen’s *A Spirituality of Fundraising*, breaks down the stereotypical and negative connotations associated with fundraising. The author asks his readers to stop viewing fundraising as “begging or having a lack of faith in God’s provisions” (Nouwen, 16). He instead offers the idea of fundraising as extending one’s spiritual mission to others and allowing them to partake in God’s work through financial means. We adopted this mindset into the foundation of

why Relay for Life is impactful in our community by directly relating donations as the keys to aiding others. Fundraising, therefore, became an opportunity to share our hopes with our fellow neighbor and allow them to directly partake in making a difference.

The most important aspect of any Servant Scholar project is a test created by Robert Greenleaf that ensures that we have inspired those we have helped to help others. With selected organizations sponsoring Little Free Pantries, educating through health and awareness surveys and fairs, and creating an interactive network through Relay for Life, more citizens in Troup County will continue to make sure the mission of these projects do not cease to exist. Generation Fit, hopefully, inspired people to strive toward achieving health and wellness. Larry Spears and Michele Lawrence's *Focus on Leadership: Servant Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* focuses on a combination of becoming a servant leader, but also inspiring others to serve their community as well. In order to energize the community to help us in some of our ambitious goals, Spears and Lawrence give some advice to those who are hoping to create servant leaders in others through listening, empathy, building a community, and awareness. While Spears and Lawrence go into more detail with each word in the text, both believe "these characteristics of servant-leadership are by no means exhaustive. However, [they] believe that [these features] serve to communicate the power and promise that this concept has to offer to those who are open to its invitation and challenge" (9). Although we lacked a central mentor, we are confident that these texts have made our intentions true and have guided us to fulfill our project.

State of LaGrange's Health

Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a top health issue in the city of LaGrange and the surrounding area of Troup county. It was found that the top causes of CVD are smoking, obesity, lack of activity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, poor eating habits, and diabetes (*Brunner & Suddarth's Textbook of Medical-Surgical Nursing*). While conducting research of the city's CVD rates, we found that Troup County ranked in the top twenty-five percent in the state for death caused by various cardiovascular diseases (*Cardiovascular Disease*). The county also ranked in the fiftieth percentile for death caused by a stroke as well as for death caused by a myocardial infarction (heart attack) (*Cardiovascular Disease*). Since the majority of the causes of cardiovascular disease are preventable, we as a cohort believed that hosting educational sessions about numerous benefits to healthy foods and quick-and-easy workouts could help these current rates decline.

Diabetes

Before conducting the following research, we did not expect that smoking would be correlated to diabetes; however, there is a significant relation between the two. The LaGrange community actually ranks number one in the state for smokers who also have diabetes (*2013 Diabetes and Smoking Data Summary*).

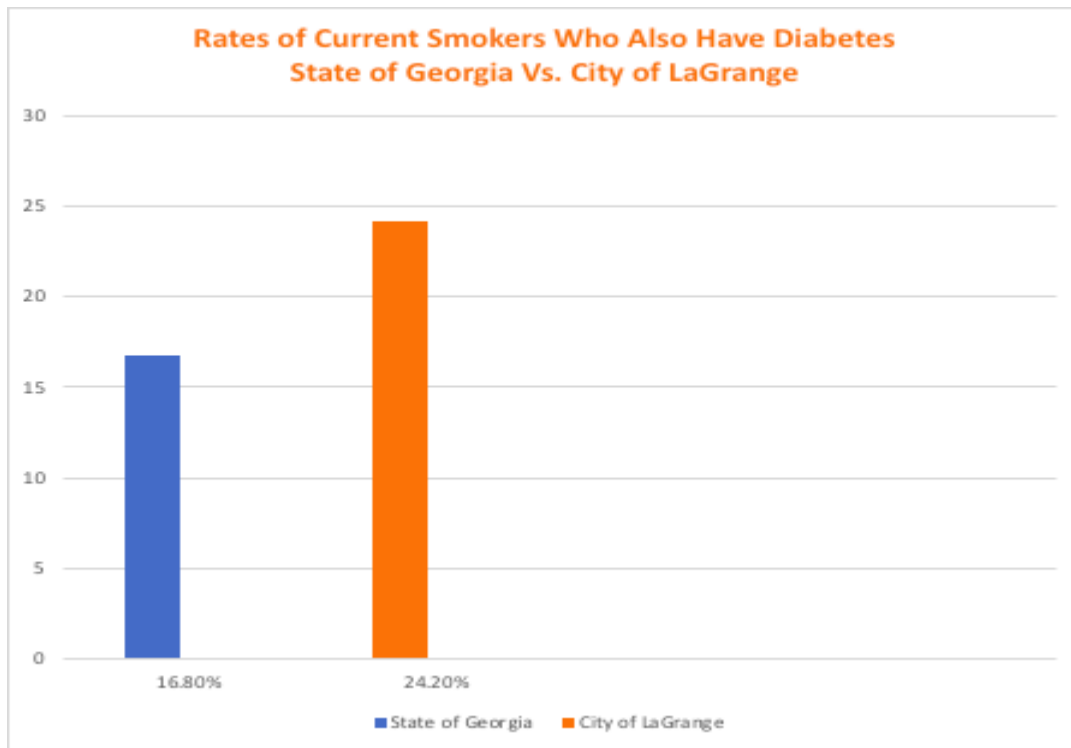


Figure 1) Data collected in 2013 by the Georgia Department of Public Health. Graph depicts the number smokers within the population who also have diabetes. LaGrange at diagnosis rate of 24.2% while the state of Georgia has a rate of 16.8% (*2013 Diabetes and Smoking Data Summary*).

In 2008, the number of individuals in Troup County that suffered from diabetes was 4,125; however, in 2013 this number drastically increased to 6,207 individuals who now live with this chronic disease (*Georgia Diagnosed Diabetes Prevalence*). It is apparent that rates of those being diagnosed with diabetes is steadily increasing. Through Generation Fit, we hope to address this substantial issue and provide simple ways to prevent chronic illnesses such as diabetes. Through various screenings and educational sessions, we also anticipate to see the rates of diabetes and smoking begin to deteriorate in general in the coming decades.

Cancer

Among the research that was conducted to discover the exact state of cancer in LaGrange, shocking data was found. LaGrange ranked number one in diagnoses of five different types of cancer, including breast, prostate, rectal, cervical, and lung and bronchus cancer. As a city, LaGrange also ranked number one for most males diagnosed with cancer in the state. In addition, females ranked number three for diagnosis rates in the state (*Georgia Cancer Data Report*). Compared to the state, Troup County's cancer diagnosis rates are seemingly higher.

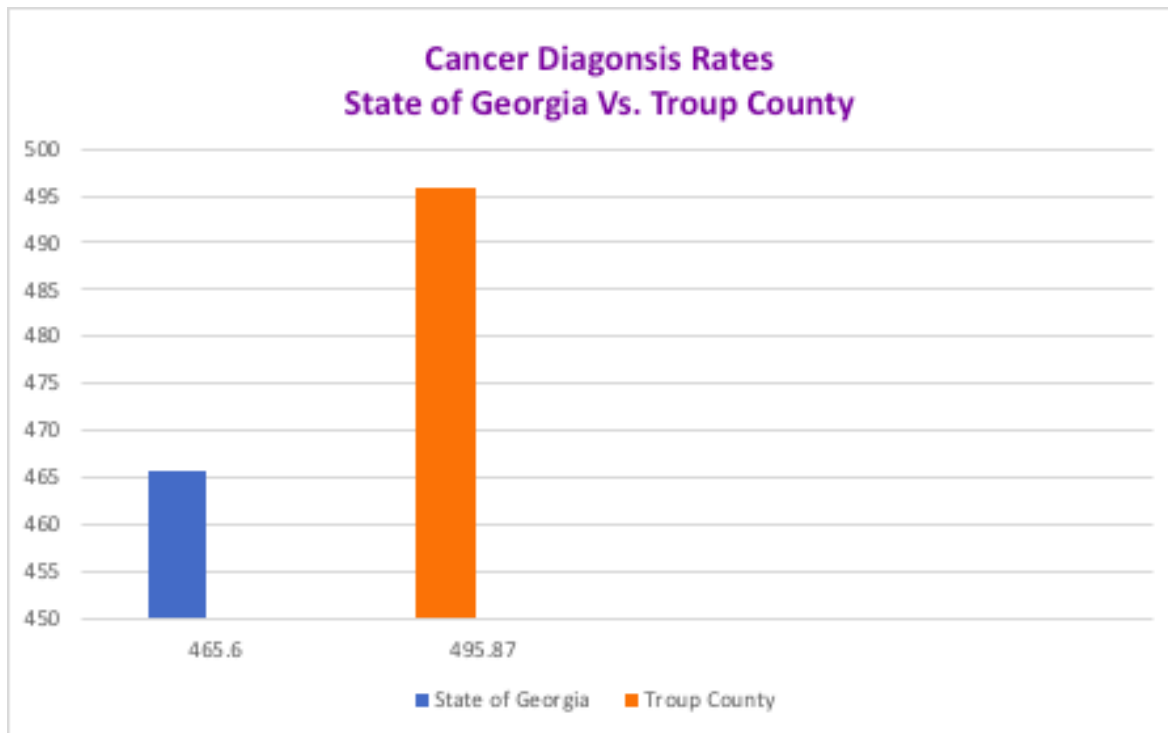


Figure 1) Data collected in 2011 showing total cancer diagnoses in the State of Georgia versus in Troup County. These numbers are represented per 100,000 people. Graph was made using data collected from the *Georgia Cancer Data Report*.

The most surprising part about these statistics is the preventability of most of these types of cancer. Breast, cervical, rectal, and lung cancers each have screening programs that can be conducted to detect stages of cancer present, including mammographies, colonoscopies, and pap-smears. Lung cancer is largely prevented by stopping the use of any type of tobacco product and any inhalant that has harmful effects on the respiratory system. We realized the importance of getting this information out to our community in order to better the overall health of the people of LaGrange.

Health and Wellness

A huge complication that impoverished people encounter is the lack of access to healthy food. Not only does the cost of living contribute to this, but another factor is the lack of education many people, not just those in poverty, have about nutrition. In light of this, the senior cohort found it necessary to present as many opportunities to live healthier lives as well as educate those who have questions. Specifically, we examined questions concerning what is considered healthy food and how to live a healthier life.

Food is fuel. Whether we enjoy eating or only eat to meet our nutritional needs, all food is fuel in the form of kilocalories. Kilocalories are the unit of measurement we use to label how much energy a certain food item has, as well as a measurement of the amount of work our bodies perform. Work can range from subconscious tasks such as breathing and digesting, but it also pertains to activities where

we know we are working, like playing a sport or exercising. However, similar to how every person is made different in their own way, every type of food comes with its own nutritional value, ranging from absolutely none to absolutely necessary.

When talking about necessity, the body requires several different forms of nourishment. The most widely known fuels are the macronutrients, consisting of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. They are given the term “macronutrients,” and are needed in large amounts to sustain life, as well as act as the driving force for many of the systems that work within the body. Proteins can be found in meats such as beef, chicken, fish, and pork, but also in vegetables such as beans and tofu. They are important because protein is essential in the process of breaking down food and sustaining and rebuilding muscle fibers. Fats, both saturated and unsaturated, are found in nuts, oils, dairy products, and avocados. While some saturated fat is important to have in the body, a person should focus on taking in more unsaturated than saturated fat in order to reduce the clogging of arteries and risk of cardiac diseases. Lastly, there are the carbohydrates, which come in simple and complex forms. Simple carbohydrates come from healthy sources such as fruits, but also processed foods like desserts and white breads. These carbohydrates are digested and used quickly by the body; they are best consumed before and after strenuous work. Complex carbohydrates are slowly digested, allowing for a steady source of energy over the course of a day. These come in the form of whole grain breads and vegetables.

Along with macronutrients, foods also contain micronutrients. Micronutrients are just as important as macronutrients, but the size of their intake is much smaller than that required by macronutrients. Nutrients that fall within this category consist of vitamins like A and C, and minerals such as sodium, zinc, potassium, and iron. Most vitamins will come from fruits and vegetables while many of the minerals will come from dairy and protein. Micronutrients are important because they perform tasks such as combating the aging process, fighting disease by strengthening the immune system, and keeping the body in a state of equilibrium.

Health Fair

The Servant Scholars were able to participate in Hillside’s fifth annual Hillside Music and Arts Festival by hosting a health fair within the Doc Spiers area. Hillside is a neighborhood located about a quarter of a mile from the college and is overseen by the non-profit organization DASH (Dependable Affordable Sustainable Housing). This historical neighborhood was the headquarters to the 2015 Servant Scholars’ Koinonia Project, and connections are still being established within the community till this day.

The event was hosted on April 14th and featured local artists, food vendors, and musicians. Elia Bates, DASH’s correspondent who organized the festival, happily allowed the Servant Scholars to host a health fair as part of the festivities after attending several class meetings in hopes of learning more about Generation Fit. DASH was in charge of all the promotional aspects for the art festival, so the Servant Scholar’s only focus was to create an awareness campaign through various tables that were stationed within the health fair.

Each table represented a specific aspect of Generation Fit along with Servant Scholars to talk specifically about that portion of Generation Fit with the attendees of the art festival. At the Little Free

Pantries table, Servant Scholars Nick Rawls and Paige Taylor had a pantry that was painted by the LaGrange College art department along with various hygiene products for men and women. Nick and Paige went into detail with the attendees about the process it took to get LaGrange's City Council to approve of the idea and the pantries' purposes. Along with this explanation, attendees were able to create their own hygiene bag to place in the pantry that would later be distributed in the community. At the Our Daily Bread table, Servant Scholars Garrett Wallace and Kylie Taunton talked about the origin of the soup kitchen and how those in Troup County can help by donating or coming to volunteer on Friday afternoons. At the art therapy table, Servant Scholars Delani White and Jake Krzysiak had two different activities for both kids and adults. The night before the festival, Jake and other volunteers created a tree mural missing leaves. Parents and their children had the option to choose what color paint they would like their leaves to be and place handprints on the mural. The other activity was writing a positive letter or note to a loved one in town, or across the country, and the Servant Scholars would mail the letter to whomever it was meant for. Servant Scholar Chris Smith hosted a community garden table featuring a large pot of soil with various other pots and seeds for several vegetables including kale, spinach, and carrots. Children were able to fill their own pots with soil and their choice of seeds to take home while Chris discussed the benefits to a community caring for their own garden. Servant Scholars Macy Milford, Cassandra Bates, Maggie Ivester, and Chandler Joyner had tables that focused on the overall health statistics of Troup County and how individuals could prevent diseases such as diabetes and cancer with balanced diets and exercise.

The Servant Scholar's health fair was able to receive a mass number of spectators thanks to the sponsorship of DASH. The festival in total, according to a meeting with Elia Bates after the event, had five-hundred people in attendance, which makes the health fair an essential awareness campaign for Generation Fit.

Bicycle Data Collection Event

While conducting the Generation Fit project, we wanted to address not only the LaGrange communities' health issues but our peers' as well. This led to the idea to host a data-collection event on campus. As a cohort, we wanted to find out whether or not healthy eating was a priority and why. We collected stationary bicycles from the college's gym, placed them on the plaza, and provided a variety of healthy and not-so-healthy snacks for our classmates. The healthy snacks consisted of apples, bananas, and oranges, while unhealthy foods provided were pizza, cupcakes, and a variety of cookies. As students came up, we asked them if they would like a snack, and out of eighty total surveys, fifty-two percent chose a healthy snack. On the contrary, forty-seven percent chose a non-healthy snack. In addition, fifty-five percent stated that eating healthy was a priority, while forty percent stated that it was not a priority. We then told them they had to bike the amount of time needed to burn the calories within the snack consumed. Our goal was for the students to see how much longer one had to exercise to burn off an unhealthy snack versus a healthy one. As a result, many students stated they were motivated to make healthier food choices in the future. One student even stated, "It does motivate me, I am already 101 lbs. down from my original weight."

Students who were motivated vs. Those who were not motivated

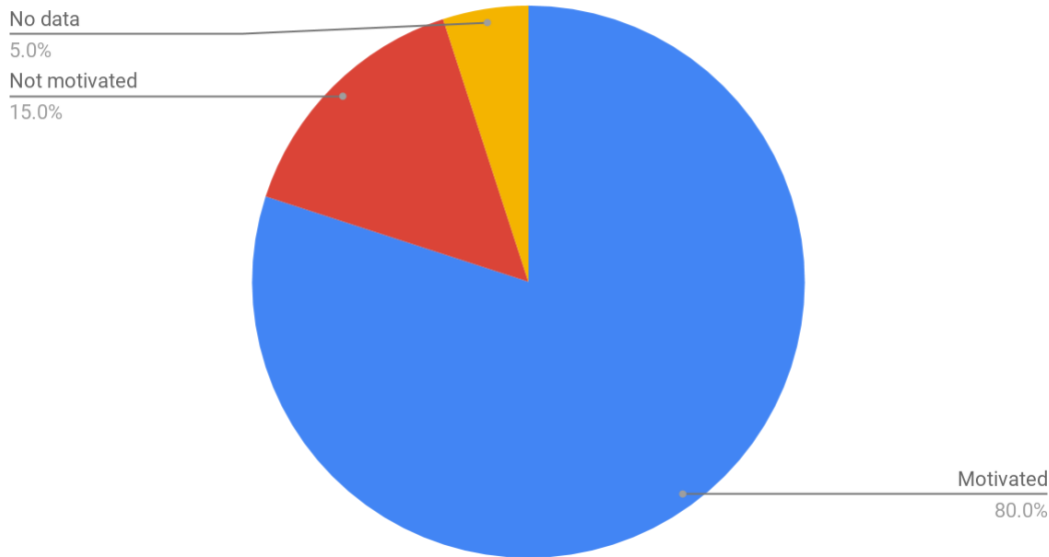


Figure 1) Pie chart showing data collected from LaGrange College students on April 20, 2018. Question stated, “Did this activity motivate you to make healthier food choices?” Majority stated that the Bike Event motivated them to make healthier foods choices.

In reference to the calorie counts that were provided with each snack, forty percent stated that they were not aware of the specific calorie counts in the foods, while forty-one percent stated they were aware of the calorie counts previous to this event. Through surveys given at the event, we asked for reasons why some selected unhealthy foods versus healthy. Figure 2 represents the data that reflects these reasons.

Reasons Why Eating Healthy is Not a Priority

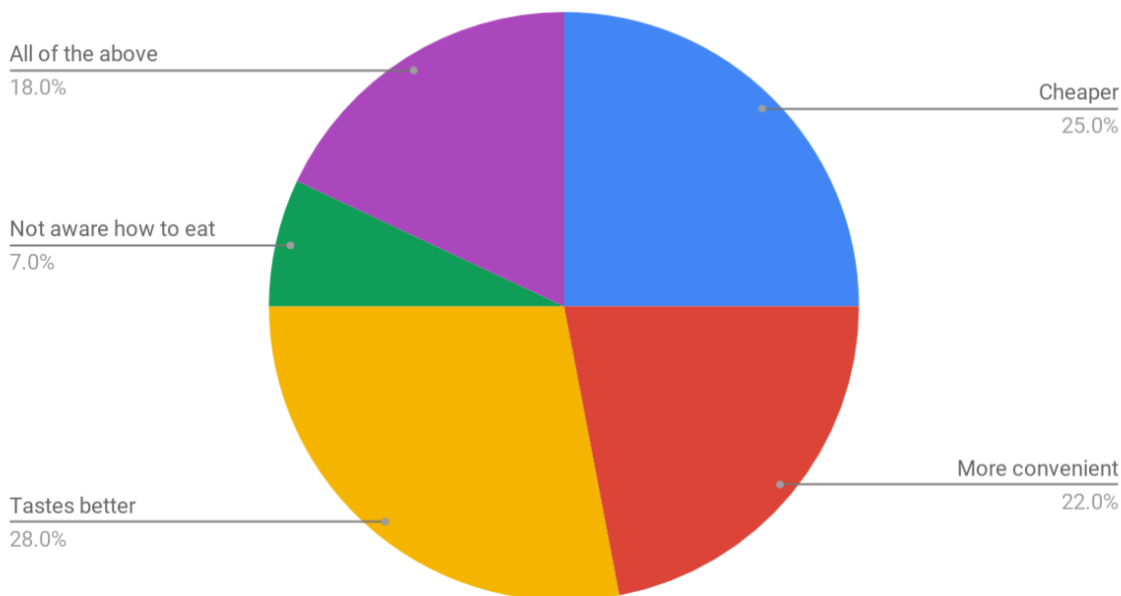


Figure 2) Pie chart showing data collected from LaGrange College students on April 20, 2018. Question asked, “If eating healthy is not a priority for you, why?” The above categories were listed and students were encouraged to pick the option that applied to them.

The Bicycle Data Collection Event was a great way for the senior cohort to understand why unhealthy eating habits are so prevalent among college students specifically. We believe that by understanding why these choices are so popular, we can help individuals our age make better food choices. This in turn, will not only impact their overall health, but will hopefully also help the deteriorating health status of the community that surrounds us daily as well.

Relay for Life

As previously mentioned, cancer is one of the diseases that continues to escalate in diagnoses and is a major contributor to the unhealthy climate we see in the city of LaGrange, Georgia. A portion of Generation Fit that tackles this epidemic by means of raising awareness, raising funds, and creating a sense of community is an event known as Relay for Life. This rally for defeating cancer came into existence in 1985 when a man by the name of Dr. Gordon Klatt ran and walked around a track for a period of 24 hours. The concept behind his mission was to simply support those fighting the battle, but it turned into so much more. Observers began to donate funds per lap he completed and the foundational slogan of Relay for Life, “Cancer never sleeps, so neither do we,” was born as the 24-hour period represented the fight continuing both day and night. Relay for Life was eventually adopted by the American Cancer Society which now hosts these events in thousands of American communities and in 27 other countries around the world (“History of Relay for Life”).

Relay for Life can be described as a large festival with many complex components. For example, it is mainly a time of celebration for survivors as one can expect to see games, music, food, and fellowship. However, it is also an important time to remember those who have lost their battles to cancer as a traditional luminaria (candle light) service is held with prayers and a moment of silence. Relay for Life events vary by length of time and location, but they all provide an opportunity to walk, just as Dr. Klatt did, and feature purple balloons, shirts, banners, and the designated ribbon color of cancerous diseases. All funds raised at any Relay for Life event are given to the American Cancer Society who uses donations in a variety of ways (see Figure 1, below). The American Cancer Society distributes funds to be used for cancer research, awareness campaigns, and financial relief for patients who need rides to appointments, wigs, free lodging, and more. The reason that one's community is the cornerstone for Relay for Life and therefore the driving force of the American Cancer Society's efforts is that 99.0% of the money they use to make a difference comes from donations. Only 1.0% of their funds are allotted by grants, contracts, and government agencies ("Where Does your Money Go?").

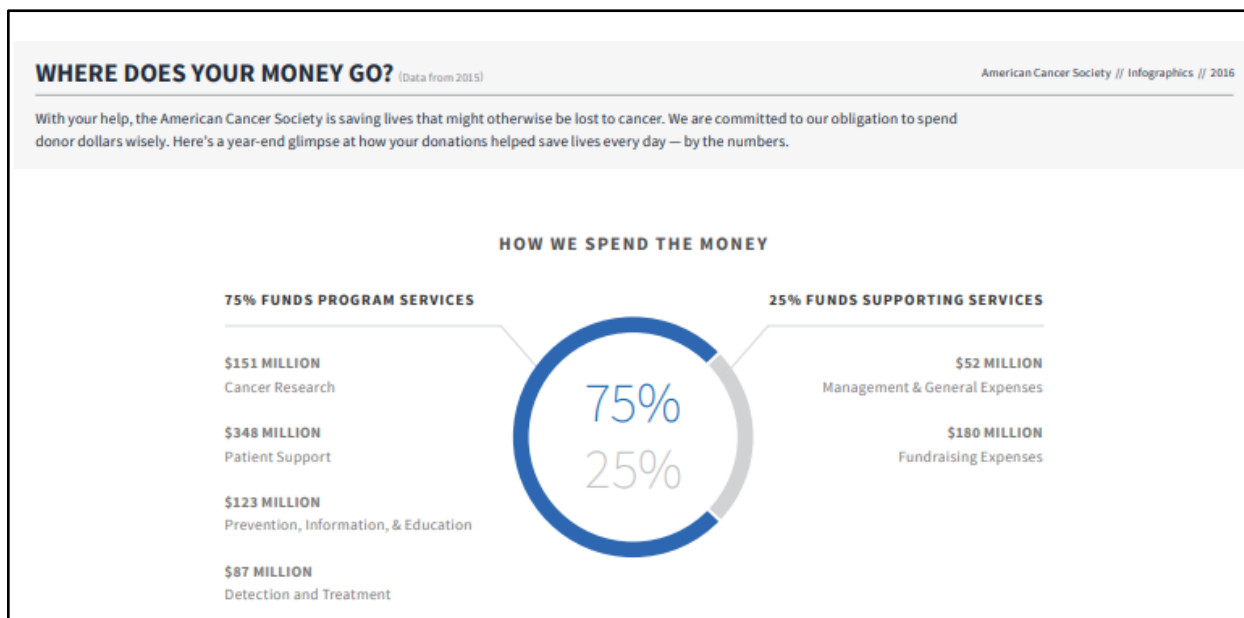


Figure 1) Data collected from 2015 regarding the expenditures that the American Cancer Society deems necessary per outlet within the realm of awareness, financial aid, and research. This graph was created by the American Cancer Society.

We as a cohort decided that organizing and hosting our own Relay for Life on campus would create a sense of awareness for students and invite the community and its survivors to partake in an event that directly relates to the passion of our project. Troup County already partakes in their own Relay for Life every April, so we were able to partner with the Event Leadership Team of the city's Relay for Life committee to host our own. In order to offer a new and exciting experience we hosted a Halloween-themed Relay for Life in October of 2017 (see Figure 2). The planning and coordination required for such a large event certainly tested our skills in communication, leadership, and teamwork, but was so rewarding once the event was successfully executed.



Figure 2) “Relay for Life Halloween Bash” flyer created by the Servant Scholars and advertised within the LaGrange community via radio, church and school newsletters, and business platforms.

Every Scholar played a major role in making this event a reality. One component we specifically wanted to incorporate was including LaGrange College Greek Life. All fraternities and sororities were encouraged to come to the Relay for Life and host their own fundraisers. This was a great addition to the evening as the students hosted everything from games to food for other students and community members. The men’s fraternity, Delta Tau Delta, raised the most money at the end of the night, approximately fifty dollars, and won free passes to attend the Callaway Gardens Beach Center. Other student group interest included face-painting offered by the LaGrange College Humane Society and Halloween decorations provided by the LaGrange College Halloweek crew.

Several community groups joined us for the evening and offered their free services and products with proceeds benefiting the American Cancer Society. Our Relay for Life event also featured health and wellness aspects to encourage attendees to increase their awareness of cancer-related issues, how to be vigilant for them, and how to volunteer to help cancer patients. These included Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center providing free health check-ups; the American Cancer Society offering pamphlets on *Road to Recovery* and *Look Good, Feel Better*, two programs that aid in offering free rides to doctor appointments and wig/beauty sessions to women subjected to chemotherapy treatment; and Body Control Pilates Studio offering a free workout to create a fun exercise activity.

The event was ultimately very successful with an attendance of around 100 individuals, consisting of both students and community members. Funds raised by Greek Life, vendors, and donations totaled over \$600, which was directly donated to the American Cancer Society. The fruits of our labor eventually became evident, but along the way it was difficult to remember why or how our mission

would be successful. Fundraising requires patience, determination, diligence, and enthusiasm, but most importantly it demands that its contributors are steadfast in their belief that the purpose of the fundraising is important and meaningful. Henri J. Nouwen encompasses this attitude that fundraisers must possess in *A Spirituality of Fundraising*. Fundraising is often viewed in a negative light or as he describes it to be “a necessary but unpleasant activity to support spiritual things” (Nouwen vii). This comment strikes a chord in our deepest core, and forces us to ask the question, why do we view fundraising in this manner? There is a feeling of detachment from the cause when you only ask for people’s money, but the concept of this action holds much more meaning. Nouwen reciprocates by saying that “fundraising is as spiritual as giving a sermon, entering a time of prayer, visiting the sick, or feeding the hungry!” (vii). The most exciting aspect of fundraising, Nouwen states, “is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission” with their donations (viii). It is unlikely that the Servant Scholars will collectively find a cure for cancer, but extending this invitation to others has been and will continue to make a difference in the lives of cancer patients on a daily basis. Nouwen offers advice for fundraisers to not grow weary in their efforts by reminding us that “wherever love grows it is stronger than death” (1 Corinthians 13:8). A mission rooted in love will not fail and only extend “our efforts [to] reach out beyond our own chronological existence” (25). As detrimental, draining, and defeating as cancer may seem, the smallest actions of hope will surpass our Generation Fit project and most likely have far greater impact than we can imagine.

The Active Life

A factor that will always play a part in our health and wellness changes is the process of aging. The states of wellness affected are both physical and mental. Maggie Ivester’s experiences with the senior citizens of Troup County at the LaGrange Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and the Active Life during her junior-year Volunteer Experience made these changes apparent. She first began her service at the nursing home where she came upon seniors that were in extremely poor condition, both physically and mentally. Some residents’ physical conditions caused them to be on bedrest indefinitely while others were physically well, but lacked the competence to function independently.

Maggie was later exposed to older adults in excellent physical and mental condition at LaGrange’s Active Life. The Active Life is a gathering place for adults who are 55 and older. This is a place where seniors go to engage with peers, participate in exercise programs, learn essential nutritional practices, and partake in pastimes. When Maggie began spending time at the center, she was enlightened by a community of older citizens who were healthy, active, and as a result, happy. Since the difference was so extreme, both mentally and physically, among the adults at LaGrange Nursing and the Active Life, we wanted to further study the reasons why. There are two issues that we wanted to tackle here. First, learn of and raise awareness on how people of the older population are making efforts to live a healthy lifestyle. Second, seek to promote mental health in seniors.

After discussing with the directors, Dan Wooten and Molly Jones, we decided to conduct interviews with the seniors. The interviews were done privately so we could make the conversations as personal as possible. We started by asking open-ended questions about their lives. We felt this promoted their mental health because, with these personal questions, they realized that the younger generation does value the experiences they have gone through and that people are still genuinely curious enough to

listen. We then asked them questions addressing their lives from a health and wellness standpoint. Several members explained how coming to the Active Life has improved their overall health tremendously. Many discussed the depression they faced with entering retirement. Ruby Parker stated, "If I didn't come here and go to church I wouldn't see anyone all week." Rhonda Ward also confirmed this. She stated, "Before I came here all I did was lay in bed all day and sleep. I did what I had to do to get through the day, but that was it." Rhonda explains how she realized that coming to the Active Life and being among many people benefited her mental and physical health significantly. She said, "Coming here is the reason I am still alive. Before, I had high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and was also struggling with my diabetes. Now I only have to worry about taking my vitamins consistently."

At the conclusion of these interviews, the Servant Scholars took away several things. We were able to build relationships with older adults of Troup County, learn valuable practices that we could pass on to the community, and encourage their generation to feel that they are still valued. Also, after learning of their means of staying happy and healthy, we were able to pass this on to those at the Hillside Arts Festival where we provided this information to people in Troup County.

Poverty Simulations

As stated previously, a large part of Generation Fit is about awareness. One of the key components to promoting an idea of wellness involves community outreach, not only through providing information, but through active involvement of the population you wish to reach. This was accomplished for our project through the help of a local non-profit organization called Circles of Troup County that a few of those within the cohort have had the pleasure of volunteering with during our junior year. Circles is a twelve-week program that is geared toward fighting poverty in the community in a radical way. Those who attend classes and commit to the program graduate at the end as a sort of celebration for working toward whatever goals they set at the beginning of their journey. They are paired with "allies" who act as a friend throughout the process, and the relationship-building among everyone in attendance shows exponential growth.

The mission of this program is not taken lightly, and the leaders of the program know that there is much that the community is highly unaware of when it comes to reasons for cyclical poverty, systems that keep people there, and even everyday life tips and hacks for becoming a functioning part of our society. In light of this, the poverty simulations that Circles holds are focused on addressing exactly that. The idea is to have simulation tables set up to represent various factors in our communities such as a National Bank, Quick Cash station, Community Action Agency, Interfaith Services, Food Store, Mortgage Companies, Pawn Shops, Police Department, Utility, Department of Social Services, School and Daycare, Employment Offices, and Community Healthcare. This event requires an average of twenty volunteers to pull off, while each participant is given the identity of a person with a family and told a few simple rules about how the simulation will run.

There are four sessions that take place that are fifteen minutes each. The goal for each participant within the simulation is to have money left over by the end of all four sessions. The sessions are intended to simulate weeks in a month, and each person is allotted a certain amount of funds starting out. This can be situational depending on the identity of the cards you have been given. For example,

“identities” can vary from a retired seventy-year-old man living on Medicare, an unemployed middle-aged father, or a hard-working successful female lawyer. Everyone starts out in different positions, but tries to reach the same goal of completing responsibilities under the pressures of poverty.

The idea behind these simulations became of interest to our cohort and Generation Fit when we started to realize that poverty is a major contributor to many of the major health issues we see around us. Troup County has a poverty rate of 21.3% (*Data USA 2016*), higher than the state and national average, as well as a Food Insecurity rate of 18.8% (*Feeding America 2018*). This indicates that efforts to support awareness of poverty are directly related to our efforts to alleviate health concerns in our community, which is where the idea to bring the event to our most closely related community became a priority. We decided to incorporate the Poverty Simulation into a Cornerstone class rotation where we hosted approximately sixty students as participants in each one. Altogether, after four different simulation days, the entire freshman class of about 250-300 students had made their way through the event.

Following each simulation, a reflection time is set aside to review statistics, talk through some of the struggles the students had in making ends meet, and draw attention to the many contributing factors of poverty in our society. The overall responses of the student participants were positive as most of them gained information and seemed to genuinely enjoy the activity. Listening to the responses, it was easy to see that many had not thought about a lot of the scenarios in such ways, and that the hands-on experience was beneficial to their understanding. We feel confident that the simulation was an effective and memorable way to point toward a larger overarching problem contributing to the issues of health and wellness we wish to impact.

Our Daily Bread

Our Daily Bread (ODB) was developed by the first Servant Scholar cohort, and since then has been upheld by each succeeding cohort as part of an obligation to continue the program. For our Generation Fit we incorporated Our Daily Bread in a more substantial way than previous cohorts. ODB, in its previous form, provided a beneficial service to members of the community that join us on Friday afternoons. However, we sought to make a number of improvements to the program that will allow it to provide a greater service to the community in the long-run.

One of the goals for the year was to encourage further involvement from students at the college outside of the Servant Scholars program. To this end, we had organizations on campus sign up to serve on particular Fridays. This encouraged further engagement from the individuals who participated as well as expanded the level of interaction between students and guests. Another important aspect that we focused on was working to mentor the next cohort in carrying on the tradition of ODB. This involved leading an introduction to ODB during the Servant Scholars retreat at the beginning of the year. This event provided an enjoyable introduction to Our Daily Bread and encouraged the next cohort to become deeply invested in the program. This also involved preparing the next cohort to take over leadership of the program after we graduate. We can proudly say that by the second semester of the junior cohort’s involvement in the program they had taken over the operations of ODB. This was largely due to their own initiative, but our ongoing presence and involvement helped make the transition a smooth one.

Far too often the goal of programs like ODB is the efficient distribution of the service that they are providing. Though as this quote from Robert Lupton demonstrates, this goal has detrimental consequences for the individuals they serve, “sometimes when we work so hard to develop efficient systems to dispense charity, with clearly posted rules, we overlook the costs of human dignity” (Lupton 53-54). We have always struggled with this unconscious motivation to prioritize efficiency over dignity. However, what we have found throughout our experiences is that the most transformational element of Our Daily Bread was developing a reciprocal relationship with the guests. This was done by encouraging volunteers from among the regular guests to assist us in preparing meals. We did receive some support when it came to preparing food, but the most significant engagement we witnessed was after the meal when it came time to clean up. Over the course of the year, more people would stay behind to help clean and put up the tables. This is deeply reflective of the ownership that many guests feel towards ODB. We also began offering name tags and encouraging all of our volunteers to spend time getting to know the guests on a personal level. All of this was implemented because we believe the work toward stronger relationships is what forms the core of Our Daily Bread.

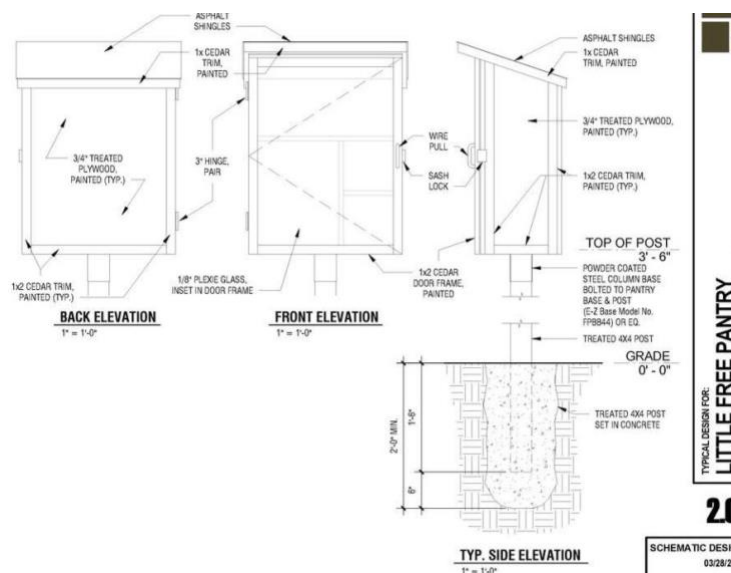
The most important aspect that we implemented into ODB that directly relates to the overall focus on health and wellness involved providing healthier meals every week. In order to achieve this goal we began our involvement with Feeding the Valley food bank. The food bank provided us with the ability to purchase higher quality food and ingredients at a greatly reduced cost. This was a priority to us because we believed that preparing meals that are not only healthy, but also delicious, reaffirms the humanity of our guests and the respect that we have for them. Due to the fact that the majority of this group suffers from the stigma of poverty, homelessness, and mental illness, showing respect and affirming the humanity of people we meet here is more substantial than any meal we could provide.

Little Free Pantries

The city of LaGrange is unique in its desire to serve the homeless community as differing groups have established soup kitchens to provide a hot meal five days a week for those who might need it. One meal a day, however, does not account for the other two meals per day that nutritionists say we are required, as well as for the weekends. There are programs put into place in some schools in Troup County that allow for students to have meals during the weekends, but those meals do not account for their families. The Little Free Pantries (LFP) program poses a solution to this issue. LFPs are a community-led solution to immediate, local needs for food and supplies. The basic idea of the LFPs is “Take what you need, leave what you can.” Establishing LFPs around LaGrange could help alleviate the problems for the homeless and those fighting poverty who do not have an easily accessible and affordable source of goods. The pantries are stocked with more than just food; they can also be stocked with things like seeds, hand-me-down clothing items, and feminine products to name a few. In order to tie these pantries into the community and get the people involved, a survey was done at ODB asking those the LFP would most likely affect. Of the participants who took the survey at ODB, 100% said that LaGrange would benefit from establishing the pantries into our community. Also, 75% of the surveyors suggested that the pantries be placed “all over LaGrange” but specifying areas such as churches, high schools or playgrounds, and even specific cross roads. Of course, before the pantries were to be considered to be placed in the areas suggested to us, we had to find out if the area is

privately owned, owned by the city, or would be a safety hazard/nuisance to the area or its neighbors. We wanted the neighbors to be supportive of the pantries and not cause destruction or a reason for complaint. Another aspect of the pantries we hoped for was getting the community involved by asking local people and companies to offer their time, donations, or both, to the idea of the project. Daily visits to each pantry are also necessary to monitor what is being stocked, what is being taken the most (i.e. what's the biggest need), and make sure they are staying safe and neat.

Blueprints (Figure 1) on how to build the pantries and secure them to the ground were taken from www.littlefreepantry.com. We took the blueprints to Home Depot and were generously given the



supplies to build four pantries.

Figure 1) Little Free Pantry Blueprints, www.littlefreepantry.com

The Scholars acted as the heads of the project, but received most of the handy work from Darryl Taunton. Mr. Taunton not only guided us throughout the building process of the pantries and offered a centralized place for us to build, but also supported us through the entirety of the project. The end goal for the pantries was to be able to hand off the responsibility to the community. At each location, there is a sponsorship for at least a year to make sure the community is responding well to the LFP. After the year, it is hoped that the community will take on the maintenance and stock the pantry. To tie the pantries even more to the campus, a pantry was placed on main campus to allow the students to take and leave items to help out one another.

During our planning, we were looking for prospective locations to place the pantries. Our criteria was simple: it had to be accessible to the public, have community support and sponsorship, and it had to be in an area where there was a great need for it. The four locations we chose as a cohort to place the pantries were: Hillside Montessori School, the Cannon Street Boys and Girls Club, LaGrange College, and the behind the St. Mark's Episcopal Church located on the Thread. Two of the four proposed

locations are owned by the City of LaGrange, so we had to ask for the city's permission to place the pantries there.

Prior to our proposal to city officials, we conducted research on local LFP programs in Georgia and we discovered that Carrollton has a LFP program. We contacted Carrollton's city officials to get information about their program and also advice on starting our own. Laci Campbell (Carrollton's Community Development Officer) sent us a packet of information that included Carrollton's resolution for the pantries, photos of some of their units, program overview information, sponsorship application with requirements, and tips for success and suggested items for the pantries. On October 26th, 2017, we presented our Little Free Pantry Proposal to LaGrange's Mayor and City Council. Our proposal was simple; we outlined an overview of the LFP program, explaining where we would like to place the pantries and the cost of building the pantries. LaGrange City Council had concerns of liability of the pantries and who would be held responsible. At the end of our presentation, LaGrange City Council ruled that they would consider our proposal and make a decision at a later date. On November 16th, 2017, the LaGrange City Council ruled in favor of LaGrange College Servant Scholars starting a Little Free Pantry Program in the City of LaGrange.

Community Garden

Throughout our time at LaGrange College we have gained a better understanding of poverty and the complications that come along with it, with the most pertinent factor being accessibility to healthy food. People in poverty can receive food stamps that help them buy food, but they often buy junk food in order to save money and be able to purchase in more abundance. This problem leads to obesity which then results in a wide range of health issues that we have already discussed. The cycle of poverty continues as these groups regularly experience health problems and accumulate even more debt because of medical bills. We hoped it would be possible to begin to break this cycle if people could gain access to healthier food. This is where the idea to start a community garden took root.

At the beginning of the year, while meeting with the leaders of Feeding the Valley food bank, Chris Smith, Garrett Wallace, and Professor Jeff Lukken met a LaGrange local, Todd Costly. Through conversation we became aware that Todd had already begun to work toward creating a community garden. We decided to partner with him because he had the land and gardening knowledge necessary, and the fact that his goals were in line with ours. We wanted to provide a space to teach people how to grow their own fresh produce. Our plan was to start growing vegetables and slowly turn over control to people in the community as we educated them on the art of gardening.

Todd was able to gain access to land just outside of town behind the Piggly-Wiggly on Roanoke Road, and a local rental company allowed us to use some of their equipment for free. We began the process of cleaning up the land and clearing off the brush to prepare the field to plant. We discussed several different ideas with Todd on how the garden would function and survive after our cohort graduated. However, as we began to implement other student organizations to get involved, we ran into some issues.

Ultimately the garden did not come into being. In spite of this, we learned a great deal. We came into the year with a different idea for the garden, but decided to change directions when we met Todd. His

goals and ideas aligned with our original garden proposal, so he seemed to be a good community partner. Unfortunately, he ended up being much busier than any of us anticipated and was often difficult to contact. We ran into several other issues during this process. One issue was that the land was not property of either the school or the city. Therefore, any student that volunteered at the garden would be without insurance coverage, which could have led to liability issues had someone been injured working in the garden. Also, while there was ample space at our location, it was too far from town to walk. Due to this, people would have had to drive, reducing the number of those we could have reached out to begin a partnership with the garden. In the future, if someone wanted to start a community garden, our cohort suggests they would need to gain access to city property, set up a strong network/system of people prior to the start of the garden, and build relationships with those in the community surrounding the location of the garden. We learned that community involvement and support from the beginning of this type of project is essential.

Solutions/Recommendations

Though we are confident that we made substantial impact with all of our service opportunities, we would like to summarize our report with a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of Generation Fit, and how groups and volunteers in Troup County can better equip themselves for promoting health and wellness in the community. It became evident that we, as a cohort, sought too many ideas that would in turn stretch us too thin. We had to cease the pursuit of some aspects of our project, including the proposed color run, the Cultural Enrichment awareness campaign, and the community garden. Hosting large-scale events takes a level of collaboration with community leaders that can sometimes be challenging as it also takes a substantial amount of resources. Two resources that we lacked at some points in our project were money and time, and that was the reason for most of our inabilities to fulfill all of our goals entirely.

From our experience with hosting events, such as the Relay for Life and the Health Fair, we realized that advertisement is imperative. We learned that the success of the event, in terms of impacting the most people, depends on the time spent encouraging people to attend and making the event known. Relay for Life was our first event we hosted. We succeeded in getting the vendors needed to make the event possible, but lacked in getting a significant number of attendees. With this being said, we were able to make a great contribution to the American Cancer Society and raise awareness of rising cancer rates in Troup County to a degree, but for future hostesses we encourage to spend more time promoting the event.

We feel our role in the Hillside Arts Festival was a success. We thank leaders of DASH tremendously for allowing us to be a part of such a big event here in LaGrange. We were able to educate people in the community of what we were promoting as a cohort as well as continuing our efforts to improve health and wellness in LaGrange. Through this event, we learned that the first step in educating the community is to engage them. This is why we had active learning stations such as the art therapy banner where civilians were able to place their hand print on a tree outline to illustrate that everyone has a role in society. Sadly, the tables with not as much hands-on activity received less attention, so that is something we noted.

Although many aspects of Generation Fit had to be removed or adjusted, we feel as though the work we did complete was justifiably successful. We were able to build relationships with those of the older community and encourage them to maintain their habits as well as passing on their practices to the community. We raised awareness of cancer, diabetes rates, and also promoted community using nutrition with the Little Free Pantries. We can only hope that our awareness events and projects will resonate with the community and that they will continue to seek a healthier lifestyle.

Conclusion

Something that has been instilled in us as Servant Scholars from the moment we joined the program is Robert Greenleaf's idea about servant leadership. That is that "the best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (Greenleaf 6). We, as the cohort of 2018, would like to believe that we have kept this focus throughout our project. We have sought and succeeded, in big and small ways, to educate and empower others in the hopes of developing a community that builds on itself. We have worked to inspire all different generations to come together and take ownership of their health and the wellness of one another. Our greatest hope and aspiration out of this entire project is to see other leaders sprouting from the seeds which we have planted to begin this long, hard journey of achieving all-around fitness and strong community for generations to come.

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